

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2017

Benjamin Friedman
Acting Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Administrator Friedman:

We write to express our concern regarding recent reports that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is considering relocating its Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) from Virginia Key to St. Petersburg.

SEFSC's current home on Virginia Key offers an invaluable strategic position for conducting hurricane research and managing fisheries in the South Atlantic and Caribbean. Its prime location gives SEFSC researchers and employees easy access to many of its important, ongoing projects making it more practical to conduct irreplaceable field work, including in support of Everglades restoration activities and basic and applied research on coral reefs. In fact, Virginia Key sits just inshore of the most extensive coral reef system in the United States where NOAA resources are currently invested in a two year project to restore and rebuild functional coral reef habitat.

This move would not only hinder SEFSC's mission in a critical region, but it will also threaten SEFSC's many proven partnerships in South Florida, including with the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science (RSMAS) which is located across the street. The long standing and close partnership between RSMAS and SEFSC has contributed to an unparalleled history of scientific advancements and collaboration.

Once again, in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations, we write in strong opposition to NOAA's consideration of relocating its Southeast Fisheries Science Center. We urge you to recognize the strategic importance of the Virginia Key location and the history and value of the interdependent partnership between our South Florida community and NOAA now and into the future.

Sincerely,



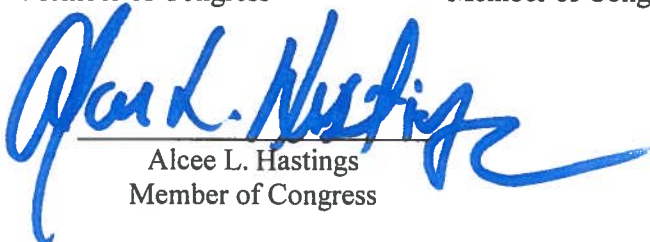
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
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Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress